

Regional Advisory Report Region 1

Prepared for the Maine Department of Transportation

By

**Northern Maine Development Commission
April 2002**

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Regional Overview	4
Political Geography	4
Physical Geography	4
Demographics	4
Economic Forces	5
Agriculture	5
Forestry	5
Manufacturing	6
Northern Maine Transportation Overview	7
Roads and Bridges	7
Freight Routes	9
Bicycle Routes	9
Access Management Issues	9
Airports	9
Northern Maine Regional	10
Houlton International	10
Northern Aroostook Regional	10
Caribou Municipal	11
Radar Facilities	11
Railroads	11
Bangor and Aroostook	11
Canadian National	11
Intermodal Facilities	12
Public Transportation	12
Aroostook Regional Transportation System	12
Cyr Bus Lines	12
Taxi Service	12
Seaports	12
Eastport	13
Searsport	13

Trails	13
Transportation Issues	14
Roads and Bridges	14
Rail Service	14
Public Transit Service	14
Air Service	15
Alternative Modes	15
Intermodal Facilities	15
Cultural Heritage	15
International Cooperation	15
Land Use and Natural Resource Management	15
Safety, Training, and Education	16
User Friendly Transportation Services	16
Public Participation	17
Public Meetings	17
Municipal Survey	21
Transportation Policies	23
Roads and Bridges	23
Transportation Funding	24
Rail	24
Intermodal Facilities	24
Airports and Air Service	24
Alternative Modes	25
Seaports	25
Public Transit	25

Introduction

This edition of the Regional Advisory Report (RAR) updates the report submitted by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee-Region 1 (RTAC-1) to the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) in October 1997. RTAC-1 submits its recommendations to the MDOT in time to be included in the development of the Twenty-Year Transportation Plan. Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC), under contract with the MDOT, provides staff support to the RTAC and coordination with the MDOT during this planning process. NMDC also provided staff support to the RTAC for the production of this RAR and the content of the report reflects the policies of the RTAC concerning the transportation planning process.

Regional Overview

Political Geography

Region 1 encompasses all of Aroostook County; Maine's largest county, the Towns of Mount Chase, Patten, and Stacyville and three unorganized townships in Penobscot County; another nineteen unorganized townships in the northern part of Piscataquis County; and the Town of Danforth in Washington County. There are 71 communities in the RTAC region. Ninety-six (96) of Aroostook County's 163 townships are located in unorganized territories, which encompass 60% of the region's total land area.

Physical Geography

The northern Maine region has a total land area of approximately 6,841 square miles. More than 88% of its land area consists of heavily wooded land that supports the county's wood, paper, and lumber industries. Less than 8% of the land is actively cultivated farmland. However, the region's rich farmland is the source of 90% of Maine's potato crop and supplies other agricultural products, which together contribute significantly to the agricultural economy of the state.

Demographics

The following includes an assessment of Maine's and Aroostook County's population. It should be noted that in several cases the data presented is for "northern Maine" which is inclusive of Aroostook County (and the unorganized territories) and portions of Washington, Penobscot, and Piscataquis Counties. Wherever possible the data available for the adjacent communities and the unorganized territories, reporting within the 2000 US Census, has been incorporated.

Northern Maine has experienced a 15% population decline from 1990 to 2000. In 1990 the population was 86,936 decreasing to 76,330 in 2000. This decline in population includes the outmigration created by the closing of Loring Air Force Base. Since the base closure accounts for a large percentage of this decline, it should be noted that the basis for the remaining outmigration is the drop in population in the 18 to 24 age group. This group tends to outmigrate with their children for better job opportunities elsewhere. Outmigration affects the economy of the region. However, there is an immigration of people in the 30 to 34 age group usually with one child. This points to the quality of life and community that make northern Maine an

attractive place to raise a family. New programs are being developed that encourage the relocation of people including this age group back to Maine.

The following chart shows the population and projections for the state, Aroostook County and the northern Maine region.

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2015
Maine	969,000	992,048	1,124,660	1,227,928	1,274,923	1,594,193
Aroostook County	106,064	94,078	91,331	86,936	73,938	70,077
Northern Maine	109,400	95,023	94,182	89,636	76,330	72,585

Source: 1960-2000 US Census and REMI 2015

Median Age and Age Groups

In 1960, the total population for northern Maine was 109,400 declining to 76,330 in 2000, a decrease 28.87%. From 1970 to 1980, the region's median age rose from 24.3 years to 33.3 years. Over the last 30 years, the region's median age has risen to 40.7 years which is higher than the median age for the state of Maine of 38.6 years.

Economic Forces

The northern Maine region is still largely dependent on natural resources as the driving economic force. Agriculture, forestry, papermaking, and food processing are the major employing industries in the region although service industries are employing more residents each year.

Agriculture

The region's farms continue to support the majority of the total potato acreage in Maine. In 1999, potato acreage dropped to approximately 64,000 acres down from 72,000 in 1996. While the amount of agricultural land in active production is declining, the yield per acre is increasing. Agricultural professionals feel this trend may be reversed in the near future, as land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) became eligible to cultivate again in 1996. Officials are also hopeful that the decrease in the overall number of acres may eventually help the quality problems associated with Maine's crop. As more land becomes available, farmers will be able to develop better rotational practices.


Forestry

More than 88% of the region's acreage consists of forests that supports wood, paper, and lumber industries. These forests extend to adjoining counties and create an "island economy" for the region. Today's land management companies manage acreage owned by the heirs of the original owners who purchased land in the 1820's when Maine separated from Massachusetts. Much of the region's raw forest products are exported to Canada due to the close proximity and traditional business associations that have existed for more than 125 years. Canadian companies have been purchasing large tracts of forestlands in the region, which could further increase the trade deficit

through the increasing exportation of raw lumber.

Manufacturing

The manufacturing industry continues to show increases in northern Maine. The two dominant manufacturing sectors are lumber and wood products and food processing (primarily potatoes), which make up about 40% of total manufacturing. Currently, wood and lumber makes up about 88% of durable goods manufacturing, and food processing makes up about 22% of nondurable goods manufacturing.



Northern Maine Transportation Overview

Road and Bridges

There are 1,125 miles of roadway maintained by the Maine Department of Transportation in northern Maine, not including the interstate system. Of that roadway, approximately 35% are 50 or more years old. Since the early 1960's new road construction has been on a steady decline. However, MDOT is presently working on 2 studies that could lead to the construction of new roads in the region, the Easton Access Study and the Aroostook County Transportation Study. The Easton Study is designed to improve access to several large manufacturers in Easton.

Roads are classified into a several different categories including:

Principal Arterial

Principal arterial system consists of a connected network of continuous routes having the following characteristics: 1. Serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics indicative of substantial statewide or interstate travel. 2. Serve all, or virtually all, urban areas in Maine. 3. Provide an integrated network without stub connections except where unusual geographic or traffic flow conditions dictate otherwise (e.g., international boundary connections and connection to coastal cities).

Minor Arterial

The minor arterial road system should, in conjunction with the principal arterial system, for a rural network having the following characteristics: 1. Link cities and larger towns (and other traffic generators, such as major resort areas, that are capable of attracting travel over similarly long distances) and form an integrated network providing interstate and intercounty service. 2. Be spaced at such intervals, consistent with population density, so that all developed areas of the State are within a reasonable distance of an arterial highway. 3. Provide (because of the two characteristics defined immediately above) service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those predominately served by rural collector or local systems. Minor arterials therefore constitute routes whose design should be expected to provide for relatively high overall travel speeds, with minimum interference to through movement.

Collector Road

The collector routes generally serve travel of primarily intracounty rather than statewide importance and constitute those routes on which (regardless of traffic volume) predominant travel distances are shorter than on arterial routes. Consequently, more moderate speeds may be typical, on the average.

Major collector roads generally: (1) provide service to any county seat not on an arterial route, to the larger towns not directly served by the higher systems, and to other traffic generators of equivalent intracounty importance, such as consolidated schools, shipping points, county parks, important mining and agricultural areas, etc.; (2) link these places with nearby larger towns or

cities, or with routes of higher classification; and (3) serve the more important intracounty travel corridors.

Minor collector roads generally: (1) spaced at intervals, consistent with population density, to collect traffic from local roads and bring all developed areas within a reasonable distance of a collector road; (2) provide service to the remaining smaller communities; and (3) link the locally important generators with their rural hinterland.

The condition of the existing roadways in northern Maine, and the rest of the state, had deteriorated at an alarming rate in the 1990s. In May 2000, the 119th legislature enacted a law that required MDOT to present annual budgets that will result in the improvements of the rural arterial highway system to modern design standards within 10 years. This represents the most ambitious highway program undertaken by MDOT. According to MDOT, Region 1 has 205 miles of National Highway System/Principal Arterial mileage of which 16.4 miles (8 percent) are considered deficient. In addition, there are 174 miles of minor arterial (18% deficient), and 488 miles of major collector (32% deficient). MDOT estimated that the cost of removing all of the backlog projects in Region 1 could exceed \$87 million. MDOT defines deficient as needing to bring the condition of the road to modern safety standards and adequate structural capacity.

Houlton is the northern terminus for the Interstate 95 corridor in the United States, before it connects with the Trans-Canada Highway System (Route 2) in New Brunswick, Canada. Along with the Trans-Canada Highway, all of these routes provide the necessary infrastructure to serve the forest products and agricultural industries, connect population centers, encourage tourism, and provide access to and from Canada. These various highways also provide vital connections to the remainder of Maine, New England, and the Atlantic Provinces of Canada.

US Route 1 serves as a major north-south rural arterial (it is a major collector below Houlton) for northeastern Aroostook County extending from Houlton to Fort Kent, passing through major urban community centers. Route 1 is generally a two lane (three lanes at strategic points), undivided highway. Route 1-A, branches from Route 1 at Mars Hill and rejoins Route 1 at Van Buren. Although carrying less traffic, Route 1-A displays the same characteristics as Route 1 and has been identified as a heavy haul truck route. Town officials along Route 1-A have indicated a greater number of trucks using the route than in the past because of the time saved and ease of movement.

High accident rate data for the years 1997 through 1999 reflects the 51 locations in Region 1 that are considered High Crash Locations (HCL) by MDOT. They include locations in Haynesville, Reed Plt. Sherman, Island Falls, Hersey, Dyer Brook, Smyrna, New Limerick, Houlton, Bridgewater, Moro Plt. Portage Lake, Fort Kent, Wallagrass, Frenchville, Madawaska, Connor, Caribou, Presque Isle, T16 R4, and T17 R5.

There are 351 bridges in the northern Maine area. Of the 351 bridges, 74% are the responsibility of the state, 15% are town, 8 % are city, and 1% are the responsibility of the Maine Forest Service. There are 334 rural bridges and 17 urban bridges. 227 bridges need no improvements at this time, 43 are in need of replacement, 30 need to be widened, and 41 need to be rehabilitated.

Freight Routes

RTAC-1 and MDOT have designated certain routes as heavy haul truck routes. Heavy haul truck routes are a highway network that carries the most significant heavy haul truck traffic in the region. Heavy haul trucks are those with three or more axles. Heavy haul truck routes in Region 1 include: Route 161 (Allagash to Fort Fairfield), Route 11 (Fort Kent to Sherman), Route 1 (Fort Kent to Danforth), Route 1-A (Van Buren to Mars Hill), Route 89 (Caribou to Limestone), Route 163 (Ashland to Easton), Route 2 (Houlton to Molunkus), and Route 2-A (Houlton to Macwahoc).

Bicycle Routes

The Northern Maine Bicycle Coalition developed a Northern Maine Bicycle Plan for RTAC-1. To evaluate corridors fairly, a number of criteria were developed. These include the identification of existing infrastructure, needed links, community connection, usefulness to users, and scenic/tourism potential. The RTAC also examined potential routes, potential barriers for construction, who is being served by the route, other possible routes in the region, and connectivity. Top priority routes in the region include: Route 1, Madawaska, Frenchville, and Fort Kent; Route 162, Frenchville, St. Agatha, T17 R5, and T17 R4; Cleveland Road, Grand Isle Road, St. Agatha, Madawaska, and Grand Isle; Route 161, Fort Kent to Caribou; Route 161, Caribou to Fort Fairfield; Grimes Road, Caribou to Fort Fairfield; Route 10, Presque Isle to Easton; Route 1-A, Van Buren to Mars Hill; Route 163, Easton to Presque Isle; Route 11, Fort Kent to Ashland; Route 1, Van Buren to Caribou; Route 1, Houlton to Danforth; Westfield Rd, Westfield Rt. 1 to the West Ridge Rd.; and Route 2-A, Houlton to Haynesville.

Access Management Issues

Access to property is crucial for development. Communities have historically encouraged construction of transportation facilities because it enabled them to expand their tax base by attracting businesses and therefore to finance community services. Unrestricted access to an arterial or collector roadway ultimately results in traffic congestion and safety problems. As growth does occur, the cumulative effect of numerous driveways on the roadways causes "side friction" that impedes the flow of through traffic. Good access management can reduce accidents and prolong the useful life of the roadway.

In 2001, Maine's Legislature directed MDOT to draft rules and regulations for the design of driveways and entrances on state and state aid highways. The goals of this legislation are to increase safety, enhance productivity and avoid future construction costs. MDOT is currently concentrating its efforts on "retrograde arterials and mobility corridors." Retrograde arterials are those arterials that have a higher than state average number of accidents due to the number of driveways or entrances located along the corridor. Retrograde arterials in region-1 include (either in their entirety or in portions): US Route-1, and state Routes 163, 167, and 89. Mobility corridors are those corridors where MDOT is seeking to maintain posted speed limits along the corridors. The only mobility corridor in the region is US Route 1 from Houlton to Caribou.

Airports

Maine is broken down for aviation planning purposes into eleven (11) regions. Region 11, which covers all of Aroostook County, has four system airports. These airports include: Northern Maine Regional, Houlton International, Northern Aroostook Regional, and Caribou Municipal.

Northern Maine Regional Airport

The Northern Maine Regional Airport (NMRA), located in Presque Isle, is one of only three certificated airports in the State. The airport has two large paved runways measuring 7,440' x 150' and 5,994' x 150'. NMRA has been designated an economic development airport and provides Aroostook County with daily commuter flights as well as scheduled flights operated by a number of overnight freight companies. Principal facilities on the airport include an air terminal building, a general aviation terminal and hangar facility, a crash rescue and maintenance building, and an office and hangar complex. NMRA offers a full line of aviation services including air charter, aircraft maintenance, flight instruction, fuel services, aircraft deicing, and on-call customs and agricultural clearance services. The facility offers a full instrument landing system (ILS) and a variety of additional current technology navigational aids. The airport, although not currently used on a regular basis by larger commercial jet aircraft, has the capacity to handle such craft.

Houlton International Airport

The Houlton International Airport is a general aviation airport located adjacent to the Canadian border and serves the southern Aroostook and Woodstock N.B. areas. The airport has one 5,016' paved runway (5-23), plus a 500' long stopway at the southerly end, and a second 5,000' paved runway (1-19). A newly constructed complete taxiway system has been built. The Airport has been designated as an "economic development airport" in the State Aviation Systems Plan; included in this plan are recommendations for a 500' runway extension and full precision instrument approach capability. Several navigation aids are available: Very High Frequency Omni Range/Distance Measuring Equipment (VOR/DME), Runway End Identifier Lights (REIL), Visual Approach Slope Indicator (VASI), and Precision Approach Patch Indicator (PAPI). Global Position Satellite (GPS) approach procedures are published. An Automated Surface Observation System (ASOS) has been installed. One hundred (100) octane and jet fuel are available, as are major air frame and power plant repair, and full Fixed Base Operator (FBO) services including on demand charter. Twenty-four hour on-call US customs service is available. Requests to reinstate Canadian Customs pre-clearance service have been initiated.

Northern Aroostook Regional Airport

The Northern Aroostook Regional Airport, located in Frenchville, is an air taxi/charter airport with a 4,600' paved runway with 200' over-runs at each end, serving northern Aroostook County. The airport is open year-round seven days per week. The airport is located on over 100 acres of land, has a 5,525 square foot terminal building and hangar, as well as conventional hanger space, 100 octane low lead fuel, jet fuel, and 15 tie-down spaces. This airport is equipped with several navigation aids (navaids) including REILS, PAPI, ASOS, and NDB. There are plans to install a

full precision GPS approach with either ALS or ALSF.

Caribou Municipal Airport

The Caribou Municipal Airport is a general aviation airport with a full service Fixed Base Operation providing airframe and power plant maintenance, flight instruction, air charter, and 100 L.L. aviation fuel sales. It has two paved runways, (1-19) is 4000' X 100' north-south runway and (11-29) is 3400' X 75' east-west runway. Both have pilot controlled runway lighting. There are fifteen (15) outdoor tie-downs and the ability to hangar six (6) aircraft. The airport is a twenty-four (24) point-of-entry for US Customs. The navigational aids available include ASOS, VOR/TAC, GPS approach procedures, and Bangor Approach Control. One run-way (1-19) has been narrowed from 150 feet wide to 100 feet and new lights and a transformer building have been constructed. A new hangar was constructed in 2000.

Radar Facilities

The Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) operates a long-range radar facility (ARSR 4) on the Albair Road in Caribou. The radar has an operational radius of 250 miles and services air traffic from airports located in Presque Isle, Caribou, Houlton, and Frenchville. There are two full-time and one part-time federal employees located at the site overseeing the day to day operations.

Railroads

The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad

The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company (BAR) operates 436 miles of Class 2 main and branch rail lines within Maine. Although once the major mover of freight in Region 1, the BAR now finds itself in financial difficulty and its future is uncertain. The BAR ships french fries from the intermodal facility in Presque Isle. The BAR pruned its trackage and upgraded its Ashland Branch to main line status and has concentrated on becoming a first-class forest products carrier. Its two largest customers, J.D. Irving LTD in Nashville Plantation and Fraser Paper in Madawaska, remain its important base in this industry. Two wafer board mills, Louisiana Pacific in New Limerick and J.M. Huber in Easton, represented additional base. Future plans at Searsport that include the capability of transferring cargo containers from rail to ship. Development in this area could greatly enhance the marketability of northern Maine's products and the need for consistent rail service.

Canadian National Railroad.

The Canadian National Railroad (CN) has signed a 99 year lease with the BAR to utilize a portion of its track from Van Buren to Madawaska. CN is now shipping much of Fraser Paper products to regional markets. CN also utilizes an international bridge owned by the B&A in Van Buren to access its mainline in New Brunswick.

Intermodal Facilities

Presque Isle Industrial Council operates an intermodal facility located in the industrial park. The facility enables cargo containers to be transferred to train flatbeds via a piggy packer. Since the economy of northern Maine is based on natural resources, which tend to be high volume and low value, this facility opens new opportunities for economic growth and enhances the ability of northern Maine farmers and manufacturers to ship products throughout the United States. The intermodal facility will allow rail users and freight haulers the opportunity for dedicated train service to southern Maine and other parts of New England. Rail lines will connect with three (3) other proposed intermodal facilities in southern Maine.

Public Transportation

Aroostook Regional Transportation System (ARTS)

The Aroostook Regional Transportation System provides general public transportation throughout Aroostook County. Services are provided from each town in the County at least once a week to the nearest commercial center. Services are available to all members of the general public from the outlying towns to the commercial center and pick-up services are available in-town to the elderly and handicapped only. Fares are charged to members of the general public and half fare is charged to the elderly and handicapped. No fare is charged to Medicaid clients going to Medicaid covered services or to the elderly and handicapped going to a medical appointment. Services are provided to individuals with special needs who attend daily work or rehabilitation programs. These daily runs are also available to the general public, but no deviation from the special runs can take place due to time limitations.

Cyr Bus Lines

Cyr Bus Lines provides daily regional bus service from northern Maine to Bangor and points south with connections to the major national bus lines. The northern most pick-up point for the bus line is in Caribou. Residents in the St. John Valley and other points to the north must arrive in Caribou before 7:00 AM. Riders who wish to go to Bangor would leave Caribou at 7:00 AM and not be able to return to the County until 10:00 PM that night.

Taxi Service

There are seven taxi services in Aroostook County. They include Aroostook Cab, Town Cab, and Viking Cab, City Cab in Caribou, Presque Isle Cab in Presque isle, Shiretown and Houlton Cab in Houlton.

Seaports

Seaport access for northern Maine products is generally found through Maine's coastal ports of Searsport and Eastport, or, if desired, through the Canadian ports of Rivière du Loup, Quebec; St. John, New Brunswick; and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Access to the Maine ports is by Interstate 95, US Route 1, or rail service.

Port of Eastport

The Port of Eastport has undergone significant changes that could dramatically affect northern Maine's economy. Currently, the port operates in the middle of downtown Eastport, contains one 420 foot pier, and is designed to handle up to 50,000 tons of cargo per year. In 1996, the port handled over 200,000 tons of cargo, over 4 times its design capacity. A new expansion is under construction less than two (2) miles from the present port at Estes Head. The new facility will include a 634 foot, a two berth pier that can accommodate a 900 foot vessel with a second 550 foot ship on the inside berth. These improvements will allow the port to more efficiently handle cargo from throughout the region.

Searsport

During the past 10 years, Searsport has handled 41% of the state's dry cargo and is one of the state's oldest commercial ports. The two commercial operators at Mack Point, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad and Sprague Energy, handle a wide variety of products including paper, lumber, fuel, salt, coal, and other chemicals.

Trails

Nearly every municipality in Region-1 has access to a year-round multi-use trail system. Bicyclists, pedestrians, All Terrain Vehicles, skiers, snowmobilers and equestrians utilize the trail system. The region's trail system includes approximately 2,200 miles of ITS snowmobile trail system. MDOT and the Maine Department of Conservation have worked with municipalities and trail user groups to purchase over 110 miles of abandoned rail line. The Bangor and Aroostook line from Houlton to Phair Junction is presently leased by MDOC and several groups are working to purchase the system through the Land for Maine's Future program.

Caribou and Presque Isle maintain bicycle and pedestrian trails in their downtown areas. Caribou's Collins Pond project and Presque Isle's downtown trail system were funded partially by MDOT. Presently, the Town of Houlton is constructing a pedestrian and bicycle trail along the Meduxnekeag River. Future plans include connections to the school grounds and park areas.

Transportation Issues

Roads and Bridges

- Need adequate funding to maintain and/or upgrade existing highway and bridge infrastructure.
- Adopt construction and design specifications, and long-term road maintenance programs, that reduce life-cycle costs and promote the use of recyclable materials.
- Develop, improve, and maintain adequate north/south and east/west transportation corridors.
- Improve public participation in the transportation planning processes.
- Improve municipal input in the transportation planning processes.
- Utilize advanced technologies and methods in road and bridge construction, whenever feasible.
- Work with the MDOT to reduce the number of high crash locations.
- Educate the public concerning funding for highway and bridge projects.
- Adequate identification of heavy haul truck routes in the region.
- Maintain and/or upgrade minor collectors and state aid routes that are utilized to access major manufactures.
- Increased education of municipalities and public on costs and funding programs for road and bridge projects.
- Increased frequency and more consistent traffic counts for the region.

Rail Service

- Stability of rail service in area.
- Rail development/redevelopment to increase shipments of goods.
- Access to rail service through maintenance/preservation of rights-of-way and infrastructure.
- Dedicated train service to provide "just-in-time" delivery of goods.
- Improve relationship between shippers and service providers.
- Better tracking and sufficient inventory of rail cars.
- Freight schedules to meet industry demands.
- Utilization of advanced technologies when feasible.
- Public and private financial assistance for system improvements.

Public Transit Service

- Increase demand and use of public transit.
- Improve present public transit schedules throughout the region.
- Maintain and enhance existing public transportation facilities and equipment.
- Financial incentives for promoting the use and marketing of public transit.
- Public and private financial mechanisms for system improvements.
- An "information highway" to facilitate services, scheduling, and ride-sharing.

Air Service

- Convenient and affordable inter- and intra-state passenger air service.
- Better marketing of the region's passenger air services.
- Formations of an airport authority to oversee the region's air facilities.
- Utilization of advanced technologies when feasible.
- Marketing program for commercial air and cargo services.
- Program for promoting "air-pooling".
- Financial incentives for the providers of intrastate air services.

Alternative Modes

- Park and ride facilities in conjunction with bicycle and pedestrian routes.
- Dormant transportation corridors to be considered for development of new thoroughfares.
- Sidewalks to be considered in relevant planning processes.
- Local ordinances to include language for sidewalk design and construction.
- Communities to create safe local bicycle routes.

Intermodal Facilities

- Intermodal connections between railroad, highway, air, and trail facilities.
- Improve access to the intermodal facility in Presque Isle.
- Explore the possibility of additional transload or intermodal facilities in the region.
- Improve access to the multi-modal deepwater port facility in Eastport.

Cultural Heritage, and Historic, Pre-Historic, and Archeological Resources.

- Preserve necessary access to cultural, historic, prehistoric, and archeological resources.

International Cooperation

- Increased marketing of the foreign trade zones in the region.
- Support the creation of additional commercial ports-of-entry in the St. John Valley.
- Encourage the use of "black box" technologies at international crossings.
- Improve access to the Trans Canada Highway for passenger vehicles and trucks.
- Repair, construct, reconstruct, and maintain existing international bridges.

Land Use and Natural Resources Management.

- Work to decrease the number of High Crash Locations (HCL) on retrograde arterials through adoption and use of access management strategies.
- Support land use and transportation strategies in local comprehensive plans.
- Education for road maintenance and construction crews on the use of environmentally sound practices.

- Develop infrastructure necessary to service vehicles that use alternative energy sources.
- Better education concerning access management on local and state roads.
- Increase the usage of alternative anti-skid materials to reduce dust emissions in “village” areas.
- Use environmentally sound alternative routes around communities that experience traffic problems.
- Widespread acceptance and use of acceptable standards for control of sedimentation and erosion in roadway ditching and in all new construction.

Safety, Training, and Education

- Increase awareness of pedestrian and bicycle user rights.
- Safety at all railroad crossings through the use of appropriate signage and lighting.
- Use transportation signage that makes motorists more aware of the possible presence of bicyclists and pedestrians on the roads.
- Safety training programs for children riding bikes and on foot.
- Education programs related to the increased use of rail and the potential dangers at rail crossings.
- Appropriate penalties for all serious traffic infractions to encourage greater compliance with traffic laws.
- Implementation of street light placement rules and installation standards.
- Educational programs promoting the use of bicycle and motorcycle helmets.

User Friendly Transportation Services Through Tourism Development

- Use international and bi-lingual signage.
- Develop tourist attractions and supporting transportation infrastructure to increase tourism.
- Better promotion and marketing of area attractions to increase tourism.
- Develop better infrastructure and mechanisms for tourist information and scenic turnouts.

Public Participation

Public participation is an important part of the transportation planning process for the update of the RAR. NMDC in cooperation with the RTAC and Eastern Maine Development Commission (EMDC) sponsored a series of meetings to obtain public input on the Regional Advisory Report. Meeting locations were: Wednesday, May 9th, AK Christie Building, Northern Maine Technical College, Presque Isle; Wednesday, May 16th, Frenchville Community Center, Route-1, Frenchville; Tuesday, May 22nd, Danforth Town Hall, Danforth; and Wednesday, May 23rd, Town Council Chambers, Town Office, Houlton. Public turn-out for these meetings was extremely low.

With the information provided from these meetings and the municipal surveys, this section was compiled and gives the RTAC and MDOT a hint as to which transportation systems are important to the region and which are not. With this information RTAC-1 and MDOT will begin to set policies for the improvement or enhancement of the region's transportation systems. Listed below are the bulleted comments from each of the meetings.

Frenchville (5/16/01)

Access Management

- Speed Limits are not fast enough on most roads in the region. Region's traffic conditions, for the most part, don't warrant low speed limits.

Arterials/Major Collectors

- Ditching should be completed earlier in the season.
- MDOT should concentrate on all roads not just arterials and major collectors.
- Need to develop a transportation system that spurs economic growth.
- Arterials need to be the priority.
- Raise the Gas Tax.
- Upgrade US Route 1.
- Look at all transportation resources in region and prioritize for need of improvement.

Taxes

- Fuel tax should go solely for road improvements.

Aroostook County Transportation Study

- Extend I-95 to St. John Valley.

Scenic By-ways

- Support development for tourism development.
- Route 161 from Fort Kent to Allagash would be a good candidate.

Weight Limits

- Raise weight limit on interstate system to 100,000 pounds.
- Keep heavy trucks off local roads.
- Fix and maintain roads so that posting does not happen.

Rail (Passenger and Freight)

- Need company in region that knows how to run a railroad.
- Need to know where funding is coming from (too many fragmented pots of funds).
- There is no support from region for rail.
- MDOT's top priority should be the movement of freight by rail.

Trails

- Should not ignore the opportunity to develop new trails but there are more pressing matters.
- MDOT should be able to work with region, as the time for trail development is good.

Shoulder Paving

- Include all rural roads.

Park and Rides

- Not necessary.

Public Transportation

- Put funding into buses.
- Present system need to adjust routes to make more beneficial to region.

Airports

- Passenger service is expensive.
- Don't ignore regional airports.
- Top priority should be to fund capital improvements.

General Comments

- Transportation should be an economic development tool.
- Fix entire system so we can keep our children in the area.
- Aroostook County Transportation Study needs to cut down on travel time.
- Transportation system needs to be efficient.

Houlton (5/23/01)

Access Management

- Generally support access management.
- Policy should help fund access roads that may need to be constructed.
- Look to local zoning regulations as opposed to blanket statements.
- Developers don't have an incentive to work with State.
- Minor collectors do not need access management regulations.
- Need specifications for road construction standards.

Arterials/Major Collectors

- State needs to adjust the definition of a major collector.
- Route 1 south of Houlton should be an Arterial.
- More projects are coming out of MDOT and municipalities can fund or handle.
- There is a disconnect between 100,000 and 80,000 pounds (heavy truck loads) on interstate and other roads.
- Truck traffic is growing - more and heavier trucks on the roads.
- Need reclassification of Route 2-A.
- State should concentrate their funds to arterial projects.
- Place restrictions on Local Roads Assistance funds so that funding goes to roads.
- Go back to the old State Aid days.

Gas Tax

- No increases, we are taxed enough.
- Recoup what should rightfully go to transportation systems improvements.
- Look to Massachusetts and privatize the road systems.

Aroostook County Transportation Study

- Support limited access road instead of divided highway with bypasses.
- Make sure that new roads pass close enough to municipalities and matches population centers. Travelers shouldn't be forced to drive through every little town.
- Smaller towns could be impacted if bypasses were constructed. Make sure all exits are well marked and "you can see the town."
- Don't contribute to decline of small towns.

Scenic By-ways

- Could create traffic in areas where it is not desired or on roads that they were not designed for.
- Need better definition of scenic-by-ways.

Weight Limits

- Lower weight limits on roads to make transload facilities more desirable and profitable.
- Minimize number of posted roads.

Rail

- Passenger rail should not be a priority of MDOT.
- If any, passenger rail in region, it should be special events only.
- Freight rail should be top priority.

Trails

- Best trail system in state is located in Portland.
- Could be a great asset to region.
- Don't always look to abandoned rail lines.
- Should be a community project with minimal state involvement.
- Do not use fuel tax to support.

Paved Shoulders

- Paved shoulder only on designed bike routes. Look to Northern Maine Bike Plan.

Park and Rides

- MDOT should fund only if approached by municipalities. State should not force region to park and rides

Public Transportation

- Support what we presently have.
- Need better long distance service.
- Petition legislature to leave funding alone.

Airports

- Review what region has to offer.
- Market the region.

Municipal Survey Results

Northern Maine Development Commission also conducted a municipal survey in the Spring of 2001 to assess the needs and issues of municipalities as they related to the transportation systems of northern Maine. Surveys were mailed to all 68 municipalities plus the County of Aroostook. There were 31 detailed responses to the survey (45.6%). The results are as follows.

Prioritized transportation systems as to their overall importance to the region. (1 being the most important)

1. Highway and Bridges (100%) rated #1
2. Rail
3. Intermodal Facilities
4. Airports
5. Multi-Use Trails
6. Public Transit
7. Seaports

Municipalities were asked their opinion on a variety of policies and transportation systems. The survey asked respondents whether they strongly support, support, oppose, strongly oppose, or “don’t know” a wide variety of issues. Below are the results with the percentage of answers in parenthesis.

Strongly Support

Pavement preservation 77%
Lowering truck weight limits on rural roads 44%
Stricter enforcement of truck weight limits 56%
Improving rural arterials 63%

Support


Urban arterial improvement program 31%	Access management 41%
Reconstruct rural roads over a 20-year period 59%	Bridge replacement/rehabilitation 59%
Improve major collectors in urban areas 36%	Railroad track and bed rehabilitation 67%
Development of limited passenger service 52%	
Paved shoulders for bicycle transportation 44%	
Increasing the number of off-road bicycle trails 52%	
Develop bicycle routes on streets in urban areas 38%	
Infrastructure improvements for the region's airports 52%	
Program to fund non-infrastructure projects for the region's airports 64%	

Oppose

Establishment of park and ride lots 41%	Establishment of vanpool/rideshare program 46%
---	--

Would you utilize park and ride lots in the region? **No 54%**

General Comments.

- Need to concentrate on maintaining what we have.
 - Support rail infrastructure improvements.
 - Should be a major highway west of Presque Isle
 - Route 161 from Fort Kent to New Canada needs a lot of work.
 - Route 2 is in need of major repairs.
 - MDOT must start a very aggressive ditching and shoulder maintenance program.
 - Roads in rural Aroostook County are deplorable.
 - Weight limits need to be checked more often.
- 

Transportation Policies

The Regional Transportation Advisory Committee-Region 1 believes that the following policies are inextricably interconnected and interdependent. However, RTAC members were asked to prioritize the transportation systems in the region and the policies that effect each system. The following list of transportation systems and policies are the results of that exercise.

Vision

A transportation network for Northern Maine which will promote economic growth and stability, which is safe, convenient, environmentally sound, and affordable while at the same time preserving cultural heritage, maintaining the region's rural quality of life and respecting private property rights.

RTAC-1 believes that MDOT's policies regarding Region-1's transportation systems should be:

Roads and Bridges

1. Continue the 10-year timeframe for the improvement of arterials.
2. Seek to shorten the 20-year timeframe for the construction of rural major collectors.
3. Develop a program for the reconstruction of urban major collectors.
4. Shorten the timeframe for the improvements of minor collectors.
5. Explore alternative funding sources for local roads and bridges.
6. Support the findings of the Aroostook County Transportation Study.
7. Encourage the study of and promote the use of recyclable materials in road construction.
8. Promote the reduction of life cycle costs by encouraging the use of advanced construction and design methods at the state/local level.
9. Improve communications among local, regional, state, and federal agencies regarding highways and bridges.
10. Promote the consideration of bicycles and pedestrians as a part of the planning process in all road and bridge construction.
11. Encourage the continued repair, reconstruction, and maintenance of existing international bridges.
12. Investigate the need for an additional international bridge in the St. John Valley.
13. Consider the development of additional international commercial ports-of-entry.
14. Designate routes in the region as heavy haul truck routes.
15. Construct designated heavy haul truck routes to a higher standard to decrease the life cycle costs of the route.
16. Review the classification of Route 2-A and Route 1 south of Houlton to determine if adjustments need to be made.
17. Support federal authorities in their efforts to determine appropriate weight limits and axle configurations on federal roads.
18. Encourage the MDOT to reserve funds for access management projects, such as demonstration projects, removal of curb cuts, etc.
19. Encourage the use of the international and bi-lingual signage systems for transportation related signs, whenever feasible.

20. Encourage better mechanisms and infrastructure for tourist information and scenic turnouts.
21. Develop a long term educational program for the public, municipal officials, and others regarding new driveway and entrance policies.
22. Promote the adoption and use of access management and site design review regulations at the local level.

Transportation Funding.

1. Advocate for increased funding for road reconstruction projects due to increased damage to the infrastructure brought about by the severity of northern Maine winters
2. Explore the possibility of a gas tax increase with funding to be used exclusively for road re-construction projects.
3. Educate the public-at-large relative to the funding mechanism for transportation projects.
4. Ask MDOT to analyze the relationship between improvements in automobile performance, the overall increase in miles traveled, and the level of the fuel tax, both federal and state, over the last twenty years.

Rail

1. Encourage and promote rail development/redevelopment to increase shipment of goods by rail.
2. Promote the improvement of access to rail service through the maintenance and preservation of rail rights of way and infrastructure.
3. Advocate for the establishment of dedicated train service to provide "just-in-time" delivery of goods to markets.
4. Investigate and encourage the use of advanced technologies in the rail system.
5. Support railroad system improvements through public/private financial mechanisms.
6. Develop an educational program on the Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP) to increase participation in the program.
7. Promote education programs on the potential dangers at rail and other trail crossings.

Intermodal Facilities

1. Explore additional funding sources for intermodal facilities.
2. Encourage feasibility studies for additional intermodal facilities.
3. Sponsor a summit between transportation providers and users to discuss future needs.
4. Develop public/private partnerships to increase usage of existing intermodal facilities.

Airports and Air Service

1. Support the statewide Maine Aviation Systems plan.
2. Advocate for additional funding for planned capital improvements to airport facilities.
3. Urge for establishment and funding of sustainable, convenient and affordable inter-and intra-state passenger air service.
4. Urge for the establishment of financial incentives for the use of air transportation.

5. Support international air services.
6. Encourage the continued maintenance of existing airport infrastructure.
7. Support the use of advanced technologies at airports within the region.
8. Support the region's efforts to market airports and air services.
9. Examine the possibility of developing a regional Airport Authority to oversee the operation of the three (3) regional airports.

Alternative Modes.

1. Identify and inventory potential new bicycle and pedestrian routes in the region.
2. Support the Northern Maine Bicycle Plan.
3. Advocate for the preservation and multiple use of dormant transportation corridors.
4. Encourage the consideration of sidewalks in all relevant planning processes and development of local ordinances.
5. Seek to coordinate MDOT/MDOC activities on all trail development projects.
6. Assure the use of transportation signage that makes people more aware of the possible presence of bicyclists and pedestrians on that route.

Seaports.

1. Support the development of multi-modal deep-water seaport facilities.
2. Seek the improvement of the carrying capacity on the Route 1 corridor and other vital arterials leading to and from Maine seaports.
3. Support the completion of the Eastport and Searsport facility improvements.
4. Develop a multi-modal facility at Searsport.

Public Transit.

1. Advocate for the use of public transportation to reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles (SOVs).
2. Seek the maintenance and enhancement of existing public transportation facilities and equipment.
3. Urge for the establishment of financial incentives for the use of public transportation.
4. Assist in the creation of public/private partnerships to increase use of public transportation.
5. Promote the use of the information highway to facilitate public transit utilization.
6. Assist local providers with the marketing of their services.